

CREST: Overview of Award Administration

When is this tip sheet needed?

When your CREST proposal is awarded (1 of 11).

Concept

As the saying goes, be careful what you wish for because you just might get it. Certainly a CREST award is an exciting opportunity to enact real changes in institutional culture. But with substantial funding comes a proportionally larger amount of responsibility and accountability. This is the first in a series of fact sheets to familiarize new PIs with their CREST responsibilities and obligations.

Management Considerations

- ❑ While you are not obligated to commit extensive funds and resources prior to the onset of your award, this is not the time for being idle. Year 1 of your CREST begins as of the award start date specified on the project's Cooperative Agreement. By this time, key staff and procedures should be in place and ready to begin with a clear outline of the expectations from them.
- ❑ In all matters, the Cooperative Agreement and the project's strategic, research and administrative plans should be your primary guidepost.
- ❑ Review "baseline" conditions (i.e., the state of affairs, research productivity, student demographics, etc., immediately before CREST funding) and document these.
- ❑ Review your "lessons learned" since the time your proposal was awarded—if not before—and begin applying these as of your award start date. Delays due to staffing, new construction, or other unexpected events do not change the fact that your award has started and a Year 1 report will be expected in about 365 days.
- ❑ Work collaboratively with your Research and Administrative directors from Day One to ensure clear lines of communication, tracking time and financial expenditures, and reaching project goals.
- ❑ Project outreach is not something that should wait for interesting outcomes. "Marketing" your CREST began with the first draft of your proposal. Keep the momentum going. The onset of funding only means you can be more strategic (and must be more accountable) for your outreach.
- ❑ Expect some start-up problems and delays. However, don't use these as an excuse to adopt a "learn as we go" mindset. Plan the work and work the plan.

Tip Sheet 2-01: Overview of Award Administration CREST Best Practices

- ❑ Remain aware of the kind of data, outcomes and other metrics for progress mentioned in the Cooperative Agreement and in your project plans. These are the data NSF and other auditors will be expecting to review. The sooner these metrics are tracked, the better.
- ❑ Remember that not all reported information (to NSF or among project staff) is likely to be good news. Reporting all information—good and bad—at the time this is noted can lay the foundation for resolving these problems later in the project.

Administrative Considerations

- ❑ The major financial and personnel accounts for the CREST should be set up and ready to go on the start date specified in the Cooperative Agreement.
- ❑ Plan on regular meetings with the Executive and Research directors to ensure everyone is “on the same page.”
- ❑ Set a schedule for administrative reporting and the content expected in those reports.
- ❑ Establish up front which data will best capture the progress and activities of the CREST relative to the project’s strategic plan and the Cooperative Agreement and track these data.
- ❑ Daily or weekly journal notes will help compose quarterly or annual reports later.

Sources and Further Reading

The CREST program solicitation

Online at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?nsf04574>

The NSF *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG)

Online at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubsys/ods/getpub.cfm?gpg>

What’s Next?

Beyond the stated goals of your CREST, how can you help to better ensure your work will help change the culture at your institution? >>> [NEXT \(Changing Institutional Culture\)](#)

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